

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Tom Dyer, Snake River Resource Area Manager, 200 South 15 East, Burley, ID 83318. Telephone (208) 677-6641. A map showing vehicle routes of travel is available from the Burley BLM Office.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Authority for this closure and restriction order may be found in 43 CFR 8364.1.

Violation of this closure is punishable by a fine not to exceed \$1,000 and/or imprisonment not to exceed 12 months.

Dated: January 16, 1996.

Tom Dyer,

Snake River Resource Area Manager.

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[OR-130-1330-04; GP6-0055]

Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Midnite Uranium Mine (MUM) Reclamation

AGENCY: Bureau of Land Management, Spokane District.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: Pursuant to Section 102 (2)(c) of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, The Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Spokane District, as the lead federal agency, will be directing the preparation of an EIS for final reclamation of the Midnite Uranium Mine located on the Spokane Indian Reservation, in Washington State. The EIS will evaluate the environmental impacts of alternative plans for mitigating the affects of past mining activities. The reclamation objective is to ensure that a physically stable condition is achieved whereat environmental impacts are mitigated or controlled and public safety is protected. This notice initiates the scoping process for the EIS and also serves as an invitation for other potential cooperating parties. Potential cooperating parties include the Spokane Tribe of Indians, the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Washington State Department of Health (WADOH).

DATES: Comments concerning the scope of the analysis should be received by March 29, 1996, to receive full consideration in the development of alternatives. Three public scoping meetings will be held: February 26, 1996 at the Spokane Tribal Longhouse, Sherwood Loop Road, Wellpinit, Washington from 2:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. and from 7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.; February 27, 1996 at the Davenport Community Memorial Hall, 511 Park

Street, Davenport, Washington from 7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.; and February 28, 1996 at the Spokane County Agricultural Center at 222 N. Havana Spokane, Washington from 7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.. Additional briefing meetings may also be held as appropriate.

ADDRESSES: Comments should be sent to the District Manager, Bureau of Land Management, Spokane District Office, 1103 N. Fancher, Spokane, Washington, 99212-1275, ATTENTION: Midnite Uranium Mine.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Kelly Courtright, Project Manager, or Gary Yeager, Planning & Environmental Coordinator, Bureau of Land Management, Spokane District Office, 1103 N. Fancher, Spokane, Washington, 99212-1275; or call (509) 536-1200.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Midnite Uranium Mine is located on the Spokane Indian Reservation, Stevens County, about 45 miles northwest of Spokane, Washington, and about 3.5 miles upstream of the Spokane River arm of Lake Roosevelt. Dawn Mining Company (DMC) leased the property and operated the Midnite Uranium Mine from 1955 to 1964 and again from 1968 to 1981. Active mining ceased on the site in 1981 and the mine has remained inactive since that time, except for construction and operation of internal drainage channels, collection of seepage below the mined area, and operation of a mine water treatment plant.

Approximately 320 acres have been directly affected by mining and waste disposal and will require reclamation. Mine workings and waste dumps span over 1,000 feet of topographic relief within the one mile length of the highly disturbed area. About 33 million tons of waste rock remain on-site. Two of the mine pits—Pits 3 and 4—totaling about 70 surface acres remain open. Another multiple pit area (Pit 2) was backfilled with mine waste rock during active operations in the 1970's.

Leases for the mining activities were issued by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The Bureau of Land Management assumed responsibility for regulating mining activities in 1983 as a result of Interior Department reorganization. The Department has determined that BLM will have primary authority for overseeing preparation of the EIS and that the decision authority on the proposed action rests by delegation with BLM.

DMC started treating mine water in 1992. The solid product of mine water treatment, a semi-solid sludge or filter cake, is classified as "source material" and must be disposed of according to

Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) regulations. This material is transported by covered truck to DMC's mill, 25 miles to the east in Ford, Washington, and off of tribal land, where uranium is extracted and the by-product, known within NRC regulations as 11.e.2. material, is piped to the nearby licensed and lined tailings pond. It is important to note that BLM and BIA have no jurisdiction at the mill site. The Washington Department of Health has regulatory jurisdiction at the mill site (off-reservation on private land) and also at the water treatment plant at the mine. That authority covers the water treatment plant's generation, handling and disposal of the regulated source material. Environmental data has been collected at the Midnite Mine for over ten years. A significant amount of data has been collected, compiled and analyzed by the U.S. Bureau of Mines (USBM). Because that agency has been eliminated by legislative action, the large body of data developed by USBM has been transferred to BLM for maintenance and management. The responsibility for site clean-up lies with DMC. Reclamation standards and reasonable alternatives will be addressed by the NEPA process initiated by this scoping action. DMC will be developing a reclamation proposal that will be considered as one approach to site reclamation, but other approaches will also be evaluated.

The Bureau of Land Management's NEPA scoping process for the EIS will include: (1) identification of issues of concern that will need to be addressed in the EIS process; (2) identification of ideas for reclamation alternatives; (3) identification of additional scientific and creditable site data that may not be reflected in the existing database; and (4) notification of interested groups, individuals, and agencies so that additional information concerning these issues can be obtained.

The scoping process will consist of news releases announcing the start of the NEPA process; and newsletters inviting the public to participate in the scoping process. A scoping summary report will be prepared at the close of scoping that will summarize the findings. This report will be made available to the public through local public libraries, and offices of the lead and cooperating agencies.

Dated January 19, 1996.

Joseph Buesing,

Spokane District Manager.

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